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ABSTRACT

Based on similar psycholinguistic principles to those on which Reading Miscue Analysis is based, the Qualitative Analysis of Silent and Oral Reading (QASOR) is a proposed framework for the investigation of individual variations in oral and silent reading behaviors. QASOR provides a framework for examining how well readers construct and reconstruct meaning as they read through a text by including measures of oral and silent reading (using miscue analysis and cloze procedures on both narrative and expository passages): by assessing prior knowledge: by examining the semantic acceptability of miscues, closures, and self-corrections: by integrating syntactic, semantic, and graphophonic information: and by sampling oral and silent reading from the beginning and final portions of a text to determine if the reader is benefiting from cumulative textual information. The QASOR framework appears to offer diagnostic insights relevant to the classroom teacher with regard to the extent to which the reader demonstrates similar strategies in oral and silent reading and on narrative and expository text: uses prior knowledge to facilitate text comprehension: attends to semantic information in the text: integrates syntactic, semantic, and graphophonic information: and uses text redundancy. (GT)

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QASOR: A Framework for Qualitatively Analyzing Silent and Oral Reading

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Although the market is repleat with diagnostic instruments which purport to assess oral reading behavior, many of these instruments lack a coherent conceptual framework for error analysis. Typically, oral reading is analyzed by quantifying errors into arbitrary categories which frequently lack appropriate theoretical rationale.

One exception to this quantitative, atheoretical approach to oral reading error analysis is the Reading Miscue Inventory (RMI) (1972) which allows qualitative analysis within a well-defined theoretical framework. Through careful, detailed analysis of oral reading miscues, the RMI allows one to infer qualitative, as well as quantitative, information about the extent to which a reader attends to and uses language cues to extract meaning as s/he reads.

While acknowledging that miscue analysis procedures such as the RMI provide valuable insights into the reading process, some researchers have questioned the comprehensiveness, accuracy, and practicality of the procedures. Newman (1978) cautions against the exclusive focus of miscue analysis on oral reading. He contends

that a more meaningful assessment of reading should include both oral and silent reading. Wixson (1979) suggests that miscue analysis procedures do not account for the influence of such factors as instructional method, level of reading proficiency, a reader's prior knowledge, and the nature of the written text, all of which research has suggested have important influences on the reading process. She indicates that "...it is possible that miscue patterns as identified by standard miscue procedures do not provide an accurate reflection of the reading process." (1979, p.170). She proposes that further refinement of miscue analysis procedures, taking into account some of the above variables, would seem appropriate. Hood (1978) contends that the complex and time-consuming procedures for analyzing and interpreting miscues limits the practicality of the procedures.

In view of these cautions regarding standard miscue procedures, it may be time to consider developing alternative diagnostic procedures. The Qualitative Analysis of Silent and Oral Reading (QASOR) is proposed as an alternative framework for investigating individual variations in oral and silent reading behaviors. Based on similar psycholinguistic principles as the RMI, QASOR proposes

1. including measures of both oral and silent reading, using miscue analysis and cloze procedures, on both narrative and expository passages.
2. including an estimate of prior knowledge of key concepts relevant to the passages read, using the PReP procedure (Langer, 1979).
3. focusing on meaning acquisition through the examination of the semantic acceptability of miscues, clozures, and self-corrections, at both the sentence and text levels.
4. focusing on syntactic, semantic, and graphophonic integration through examination of miscues, clozures, and self-corrections.
5. examining qualitative differences in miscues/clozures by sampling from the beginning and final portions of text.

By including measures of oral and silent reading on both narrative and expository passages, by assessing prior knowledge, by analyzing self-corrections as well as miscues, and by comparing miscues/clozures from different portions of text, QASOR provides a framework for examining how well a reader constructs and reconstructs meaning as s/he reads through a text.

I. Rationales and Procedures for QASOR

1. Oral and silent reading of narrative and expository text. It is important not to overgeneralize oral reading performance to silent reading. Whereas oral reading emphasizes a forward moving process, during silent reading, a reader is able to re-read and re-check information. In addition, Newman, (1978) suggests that silent reading allows a reader more time to use graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cues.

QASOR proposes assessing both oral and silent reading. Oral reading is assessed through miscue analysis, while silent reading is assessed through a modified cloze procedure. Cambourne (1977) and Farren (1977) have suggested that just as miscues can be analyzed to provide information about the enroute oral reading process, so too, cloze responses can be examined to gain insights about the enroute silent reading process. By comparing miscue patterns in both oral and silent reading, one can estimate to what extent a reader is using similar strategies.

To obtain data on both oral and silent reading, the reader is requested to read, through a text silently, completing cloze on selected portions as s/he reads. After reading the whole text silently, s/he is then directed to read specific portions orally.

Each reader reads, silently and orally both an expository and a narrative passage. Miscue research (Brazee, 1976; Carlson,1970) has indicated there are qualitative differences in miscues on

narrative and expository texts. As well, Wixson, (1979) contends that the structure and content of reading materials influences miscue patterns. Performance on one type of text may not be generalizable to other text types. As classroom reading material typically includes both narrative and expository text, assessment of reading behavior should include both types of material. Admittedly, there are a variety of different types of narration and exposition. Following QASOR guidelines, one should try to select narratives which follow the general organizational structure characteristic of typical narratives, that is, setting, theme, plot, resolution (Thorndyke,1977), and expository selections which are self-contained and develop only one major topic. As well, subtopics should clearly refer to each other and the main topic. It is important that passages be well-organized and cohesive, in order that a reader can take advantage of the redundancy and referential structure within the passage.

It is important too, that passages be of sufficient length, as miscue research (Menosky, 1970) has indicated that the quality of miscues changes when short passages are required. Goodman and Goodman, (1977) suggested that short passages do not provide the reader with sufficient cues to develop a sense of the author's meaning and style. "Longer passages offer redundant opportunities to recover and self correct." (1977, p.330). Smith (1971) contends that longer passages are easier to read than shorter ones as they usually provide more extensive context and greater redundancy, and therefore, more opportunities for predicting and acquiring meaning.

The QASOR procedures recommend using texts approximately 1000 words or longer. This length more closely reflects the average length of natural text than the short passages typically used in standardized and informal tests. As well, this length allows an adequate number of cloze deletions to make confident inferences about a reader's use of semantic and syntactic redundancy to predict deleted words.

2. Prior Knowledge Assessment.

Of itself, print carries no meaning. Rather, it is the reader's prior knowledge which allows the individual to anticipate and interpret meaningfully an author's intended message. For a reader to process a test successfully, new concepts and vocabulary must be linked to prior knowledge.

Miscue research provides evidence that prior knowledge does influence miscue patterns. Thomas (1975) found that a reader's tendency to produce syntactically and/or semantically acceptable miscues depends on some extent on the degree to which s/he understands the material. Rousch (1972) found that average grade four readers who lacked prior knowledge of material being read, generated more graphonic miscues and made fewer self-corrections than readers with more complete prior knowledge.

QASOR proposes including an assessment of prior knowledge using the PReP procedure developed by Langer (1979). This procedure attempts to scale quality of knowledge (from little to much) that a reader possesses about a concept, in terms of the extent to which relevant aspects of its meaning are organized.

Using PReP, one examines the text to be read to identify one or more dominant concepts which are essential to the cohesion of the text structure. The reader is requested to provide as much information as possible about the concept(s) selected. This information is then scored to determine the extent of the reader's prior knowledge for the passage. This prior knowledge score can be compared with miscue patterns to determine the extent to which the two interrelate.

3. Meaning Acquisition.

QASOR suggests examining the extent to which a reader attends to meaning by examining the semantic acceptability of miscues, clozures and self-corrections. By examining semantic acceptability at both the

sentence and text level, one can attempt to determine the extent to which the reader is adding up information as s/he reads through a text. By examining self corrections, one can obtain another estimate of a reader's awareness of semantic information. Good readers tend to self correct selectively, whereas, poor readers either do not self correct, or they tend to over correct. By examining the semantic acceptability of miscues and clozures, and by assessing the proportion of meaningful self corrections, one can estimate to what extent a reader is acquiring meaning as s/he processes text.

4. Integration of syntactic, semantic, and graphophonic information.

Like other miscue analysis procedures, QASOR recommends examining miscues and self corrections to determine whether they are semantically acceptable within the sentence or the context of the text, whether they are syntactically acceptable within the sentence, and/or, if they are graphophonically similar to the text word, in at least two or three parts. Unlike standard miscue procedures however, QASOR extends this examination of syntactic, semantic, and graphonic acceptability to cloze replacements. Miscues and self corrections at both the text and sentence levels are considered, in order to determine the extent to which a reader is able to integrate the information processed during oral and silent reading.

5. Progressive sampling of oral and silent reading.

Menosky (1971), in her analysis of oral reading miscues across varying portions of text, found that depending on a reader's proficiency, the quality of miscues changed across text. Poor readers produced more unacceptable miscues in the beginning, than in subsequent portions of text.

QASOR recommends sampling oral and silent reading from the beginning and final portions of a text to determine if the reader is benefitting from cumulative textual information. This progressive sampling of reading behavior can be accomplished by dividing a text into eight equal segments. Cloze passages are prepared on the fourth and eighth sections, for a total of fifty deletions. A reader

is directed to read orally the second and sixth sections, after s/he has read the whole text silently, completing the cloze portions. Oral and silent reading performance on beginning and final portions of text can then be compared to determine if there are differences in the quantity and quality of miscues.

II. Proposed Qualitative Insights

As it includes parallel measures of oral and silent reading, on both narrative and expository text, potentially, at least, the QASOR framework appears to offer diagnostic insights relevant to the classroom teacher. These insights can be considered in terms of the following six questions.

1. To what extent does the reader demonstrate similar strategies in oral and silent reading?

That is, does the fact that oral reading emphasizes a forward moving process, whereas during silent reading a reader can reread and recheck information, influence the quantity and quality of miscues, clozures, and self corrections? Poor readers who have many non-meaningful miscues, will likely exhibit a similar proportion of miscues/clozures. This happens because they have not learned strategies for attending to syntactic and semantic information, but focus primarily on graphophonic information. In contrast, relatively fluent readers may vary considerably in the proportion of meaningful miscues exhibited in oral and silent reading. Frequently these differences will reflect a higher meaning acquisition score in silent, than in oral, reading. This pattern indicates that the reader is treating reading as both a construction and reconstruction process. S/he is able to compensate for within sentence prediction errors during silent reading by selectively reconstructing those miscues which are incongruent with the overall contextual meaning.

2. To what extent does the reader demonstrate similar strategies on narrative and expository text?

By comparing the quantity and quality of miscues, clozures, and

self corrections, on both text genres, one can estimate whether a reader is able to process both with equal facility. If the pattern of miscues differs significantly between these text types, it could be due to the fact that the reader lacks appropriate strategies for reading different text structures. Facility with narrative does not necessarily mean a reader will be able to cope effectively and efficiently with expository text. By comparing performance on both narrative and expository passages one can more confidently generalize how well a student will deal with classroom material which typically includes both.

3. To what extent does the reader use prior knowledge to facilitate text comprehension?

Does a reader with a high prior knowledge score produce better quality miscues than the reader with a low prior knowledge score? By comparing a reader's prior knowledge score with the pattern of miscues, one can estimate how well s/he was able to use prior knowledge to process the text. If a reader demonstrates minimal knowledge about key concepts developed in a text, one would anticipate that s/he would have difficulty predicting and interpreting the text. Therefore, the proportion of nonmeaningful miscues would likely be high. As well, the reader would not likely make many meaningful self-corrections. By including an assessment of prior knowledge one can estimate the extent to which miscues are related to a lack of conceptual background, or due to confusions in processing syntactic, semantic, and graphophonic information.

4. To what extent does the reader attend to semantic information in the text?

By examining the proportion of miscues/clozures that make sense, one can estimate the extent of a reader's awareness that reading should be a meaning-centered process. A reader whose meaningful miscues exceed his/her miscues is demonstrating that s/he knows that reading should sound like language and make sense. By comparing the

ratio of meaningful to non-meaningful miscues/clozures, one can estimate how well a reader gains meaning.

Examination of self corrections can provide additional information about meaning acquisition. A relatively fluent reader's self corrections will likely be sensible at either the sentence or total text level. This reader tends to self correct selectively, correcting only those miscues which interfere with meaning. A reader with fewer meaningful than non-meaningful miscues will likely overcorrect or not correct at all. Overcorrectors tend to ignore meaning by focusing on the most immediate information being processed at the expense of integrating it with the larger meaning of the text message. Readers who make few or no self corrections seem not to perceive reading as involving the construction and reconstruction of meaning. Reconstruction involves correcting miscues on the basis of information that precede, as well as follows.

5. To what extent does the reader integrate syntactic, semantic, and graphophonic information?

By considering whether a reader's miscues/clozures and self corrections are syntactically, semantically, and graphophonically acceptable, one can determine how well the reader integrates linguistic information. The proficient reader, more likely than the less proficient, produces miscues, clozures and self corrections which are syntactically and semantically acceptable. By comparing miscues and clozures one can assess to what extent the reader uses similar strategies during oral and silent reading for processing text.

6. To what extent does the reader use text redundancy?

By comparing the quantity and quality of self corrections, miscues, and clozures fro the beginning and final portions of text, one can attempt to determine if the reader is benefitting from cumulative information acquired as s/he reads through a text. Fluent readers, those who are able to take full advantage of semantic redundancy and textual connectiveness, will likely make fewer miscues in the final

than beginning portions of text. Less fluent readers, however, those who are less able to use the full range of text redundancy, will likely make a similar proportion of miscues in the beginning and final portions of text. The reader with a higher proportion of meaningful than nonmeaningful miscues/clozures in the final portions of text is assumed to be more capable of integrating text information.

These six proposed qualitative insights provide some indication of the qualitative information which QASOR attempts to assess. Considering aspects of both reader (prior knowledge) and text (narrative and expository texts), QASOR proposes examining how these factors interrelate to produce various miscue patterns in oral and silent reading. The qualitative analysis and comparison of oral and silent reading performance allows one to have more than one window on the reading process. Although still a proposed framework, rather than a diagnostic instrument, QASOR appears to represent a viable, qualitative alternative to skills focused quantitative assessment devices.

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